



Ensuring that Consumers Get Their Money's Worth is a Team Effort

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Editor's Note: National Weights and Measures Week is March 1-7, 2012. Weights and Measures Week marks the signing of the first weights and measure law by President John Adams on March 2, 1799. Wisconsin's program dates back to 1839, when the Wisconsin Territorial legislature enacted a law standardizing weights and measures to benefit both retailers and consumers alike.

There are opportunities for reporters to ride along with a DATCP Weights and Measures inspector. Those interested should call Jerad Albracht at 608-224-5007.

MADISON – Your last grocery shopping trip may have included meat and cheese from the deli, grain from the bulk bins, fruits and vegetables from the produce section and gasoline from the pump outside of the store. How can you be sure that you received the correct amount for the price you paid?

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP)'s Weights and Measures team is responsible for monitoring the accuracy of scales, package weights, price scanners and gas pumps at stores throughout the state.

"Weights and Measures puts trust into every transaction," said Sandy Chalmers, Division Administrator of Trade and Consumer Protection. "This enhances consumer confidence, enables Wisconsin businesses to compete fairly at home and abroad, and strengthens the state's economy."

"Thanks to the team's enforcement of measurement standards, consumers were charged correctly or even undercharged more than 98% of the time in Wisconsin in 2011," added Chalmers.

Wisconsin's Weights and Measures team ensures accuracy through a mix of laboratory and field testing. At DATCP's metrology lab in Madison, two metrologists calibrate and test the equipment that inspectors use to check measurement devices at commercial businesses. In the field, 15 inspectors make unannounced visits to stores and gas stations to test scales, scanners and pumps for accuracy. Violations are reported to store management and orders are issued to correct the issue.

"Violations are taken seriously and can result in the immediate shut down of a gas pump, scale or product sales," said Chalmers. "Higher level enforcement is possible for repeat violations. These steps are taken to ensure that Wisconsin consumers can be confident they are getting their money's worth."

In 2011, state weights and measures inspectors conducted 196,986 inspections, including:

	Number of inspections	Consumer Confidence*	Total Accuracy Rate**
Gasoline Pumps	30,864	99.6%	97.9%
Price Scanners (Items tested)	34,654	98.6%	97.2%
Retail Scales	8,569	99.7%	96.6%
Package Weight	118,923	98.8%	98.8%

* Percent of time a consumer would be charged accurately or undercharged

** Includes all overcharges and undercharges

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In 2011, fourteen companies paid civil forfeiture settlements totaling \$226,957 as a result of weights and measures inspections into the following issues:

• Bruce Foods Corporation	\$85,000	False quantities, turkey fryer oil
• Krist Oil Co.	\$65,000	False quantities, LPG cylinders
• Kraft Foods Global, Inc.	\$16,957.50	False quantities, Oscar Meyer franks/Kraft cheese
• Advance Auto Parts, Inc.	\$12,966.50	Price misrepresentations
• Bath & Body Works LLC	\$11,000	Price misrepresentations
• Genuine Parts Co. d/b/a NAPA	\$8,682.50	Price misrepresentations
• O'Reilly Automotive Stores, Inc.	\$7,894.50	Price misrepresentations
• The Delong Company Inc.	\$4,974.00	False quantities, wild animal feed
• Troy Halverson, d/b/a NAPA	\$4,713.50	Price misrepresentations
• Best Buy Stores, L.P.	\$4,662.00	Price misrepresentations
• AutoZone Stores, Inc.	\$1,972.50	Price misrepresentations
• Northern Scale LLC	\$1,651.00	Installing vehicle scale without permit
• Midwest Scale LLC	\$892.50	Uncertified weights & measures technician
• Badger Scale Inc.	\$590.50	Misrepresenting weights & measures device is correct

For more weights and measures information or to file a consumer complaint, contact the Bureau of Consumer Protection on the web at datcp.wisconsin.gov, via email at datcp@wi.gov or by phone at 800-422-7128.

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